



DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Dale J Schmidt Sheriff Scott Mittelstadt Chief Deputy

April Sheriff's Column – Our Community's Response to Sex Trafficking

Recently you may have heard about sex trafficking in the news. Since it is such a big topic of conversation, I thought I would spend some time this month explaining why it is such a problem. Sex trafficking is more than just prostitution and it is far from a victimless crime. It is criminal activity aimed at exploiting young women for money. It is a violent business in which "pimps" claim ownership of women, treating them like property in what can best be described as sex slavery.

So how do these pimps recruit their girls? Present day pimps use technology, charm and smooth talking to get what they want. They use things like text messaging, Facebook, Twitter and other social media forums to lure their victims in. These predators go to places where young people like to hang out like malls or parks and charm young girls making them feel special and important. They might buy drugs or alcohol in order to be that person who makes them feel good. Once a pimp has a girl hooked, they turn that charm into guilt, submission and control that becomes physical violence. These girls are then forced to participate in sex for money at strip clubs, gang run establishments, drug houses and also out on the streets. Pimps will inflict pain and punishment for failing to meet cash quotas expected of them.

This all sounds horrible and it is. So how do we intervene and put a stop to the violence? It starts with parents being involved in their children's lives, educating them and monitoring people they hang out with and the activity that they participate in online. Parents need to realize that sex trafficking is real and a real threat to their children even here in Dodge County. While it may seem like an intrusion of our child's privacy, it is our job as parents to monitor their activity to ensure they do not fall victim to these predators. Parents need to guide their children and ensure their safety which means reviewing internet history, text messages and chat room history. Children may not like it but it is important to keep them safe.

Community involvement is another important deterrent to sex trafficking. We need your help in reporting suspicious activity, seeking help for those who have been caught up in sex trafficking and creating a community that will not tolerate sex trafficking. Our community must monitor and take legal action against establishments that are known for promoting sex trafficking. Village, city and town boards must realize that they have power to monitor and restrict strip club activity. I encourage all boards to implement ordinances before strip clubs ever consider opening doors in their jurisdiction as a preemptive action to keeping our children safe. They have the power to implement restrictions and demerit point systems to ensure compliance with the law or risking losing their liquor license.

Become educated on sex trafficking and the dangers associated with it. Get involved with groups fighting to make change in our community so we can work together to protect these young women. Crime prevention through environmental design can also help to deter this activity. Cleaning up our neighborhoods, increased lighting at night and letting these individuals know they are being watched are simple strategies that can and should be employed. Our community must work together to combat sex trafficking so that we can keep our loved ones safe. If we work collaboratively to find solutions, together we can keep Dodge County a safe place for everyone to live, work and visit.

Sheriff Dale J. Schmidt